

# THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY

As part of our national safety network, Public Health Laboratories are on the front line:

- ✓ **Monitoring** the environments in which we live, work, and play
- ✓ **Investigating** and **Containing** emerging infectious diseases and outbreaks
- ✓ **Preventing** disease and disability in vulnerable populations, including women and children
- ✓ **Developing** new methods to combat infectious diseases
- ✓ **Preparing** for and responding to local, state, and national emergencies, such as bioterrorism and natural disasters
- ✓ **Informing** communities and government about threats or risks to health
- ✓ **Formulating** policies that ensure the health and safety of communities

Public Health Laboratories have a unique and important role in protecting the health of our nation. They have a mandate to:

- ✓ **Assess** the health of their communities
- ✓ **Ensure** safe and disease-free communities
- ✓ **Investigate, Identify, Report, and Control** threats to health
- ✓ **Screen** for infectious and chronic diseases to prevent death and disability
- ✓ **Research** and **Develop** new methods to detect chemical and biological threats
- ✓ **Inform** and **Educate** the public and community officials about risks to health
- ✓ **Regulate** private and clinical laboratories to ensure quality laboratory practices
- ✓ **Train** laboratory professionals
- ✓ **Participate** in formulation of policies for the health and safety of our citizens

*Public health laboratories are integral to our nation's health system. We are uniquely qualified to support surveillance activities, conduct outbreak investigations, and monitor for new or emerging infectious diseases.*

*We are among the first line of defenses against bioterrorism. The health and safety of our nation depends on us!*